

Take You Back (mileven) by flustered dreams

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Summary: One summer changed everything. Will they ever be able to get it back to normal? (SEASON 3 SPOILERS)

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IT WAS A LITTLE WEIRD.

Eleven herself had never really experienced the stress of moving. The first time she'd done it, it had been weird, yes, but it had mostly been a huge relief.

Change had naturally come with it, but it was smooth and it was amazing. She was out of the bad men's hands and living with someone who truly cared for her and her well-being. Hopper had given her *happiness*.

Granted, it hadn't been as glamorous as she mostly remembered it. Her mind glossed over the endless months of missing Mike and the party, over countless hours of reaching out but never being able to say the one thing she wanted to.

I'm here.

In a way, she missed that move. That change had been so much easier. The puzzle of her life had merely been shifting into place, back then.

But now a piece of her puzzle was gone.

Joyce was nice, she couldn't deny that. Joyce did everything in her power to try and make El feel at home and welcomed. She'd even started up some of the old traditions she'd begun with Hopper.

Game nights every other day. Will and Jonathan would join in often, too, and they'd compete and laugh for hours. Then they'd occasionally pick up some Eggos and surprise Eleven when she'd wake up in the morning, a full can of whip cream waiting next to her plate on the table. And sometimes Joyce would let her stay up late so that they could sit on the couch, snuggle up against one another, and watch westerns until her eyes were dropping and she was lost to her dreams.

Moving into the new house was hard. It was away from Hawkins —

far away. Not just a town over like she'd thought it would be, no. It was *way* out of range.

She'd tried a couple of times to sneak into Will's new room and reach Mike or Dustin or Lucas or Max or *anyone* on the walkietalkie, but to no avail. She finally gave up after she was caught by a very disheveled Will, who shot up in bed in the middle of the night and nearly jumped on her.

After his bleary eyes adjusted to the light and El's frantic whispering informed him that she wasn't an intruder, Will straightened in his bed and sighed. He softly explained to her that it wouldn't work — they were too far away.

Eleven tried stretching out her mind after that. She had all but given up on her powers for the last few months, sure that they just wouldn't work anymore. But that was *l* she had left to try. It was practically her last option.

Not much to her surprise, it didn't work. Her nose wouldn't even bleed like she had thought, and the tissue box sitting next to her, waiting for her as she tugged off the blindfold and hugged out a dejected sigh, was put to waste.

She knew she could probably just ask Joyce to use the phone, but she also wasn't very sure if she was ready for that. She loved Joyce, but she also didn't want her pseudo mom to take her request in the wrong way. Eleven didn't want her to think something absurd, like that she wasn't enough for her or something along those lines. She was content with her family, but a part of her was still tied to Hawkins.

When it boiled down to it, maybe she was just a coward who couldn't decide what she wanted. She wanted to talk to the party, but she also didn't. She wanted to stay as silent as she could and just get close to the Byers, but she also wanted to talk about all that she'd lost.

Jonathan, surprisingly, was the first to really notice her unease. He wasn't around the house too often, always out working and living his life — she didn't blame him for that, though. He was legally an adult, Joyce had explained. He was just a very nice legal adult, since he

decided to stick around and help them out.

Jonathan had frowned at her the one night he came home. It was late at night, the sun far gone from the air as stars glittered across sky. She jumped when he'd opened the door, walking into the foyer and peeking around the corner to glance at her in the living room.

Joyce was asleep next to her on the couch, Will huddled up against her one side. Joyce's arm was splayed out near Eleven in some attempt to embrace her, but El had noticeably scooted off to the side, as if she was afraid of the intimacy.

Jonathan's eyes had settled on the picture and his lips had quirked down in the very slightest. She could barely see it in the dim light, but even if she hadn't noticed it, she would have felt it. There was some sort of thickness to the air — some indiscernible message and emotion wavering between the two of them.

Whether it was *I know how you're feeling* or *Why are you feeling this way?*, Eleven couldn't tell.

Nonetheless, it didn't scare her. It didn't make her uneasy or feel distant from him. The brief interaction, if it could even be called any interaction, had made her feel more calm. Close to him, even.

Jonathan had broke eye contact after that, quietly clearing his throats and closing and locking the door before kicking off his shoes and padding into the kitchen. Eleven watched curiously as Jonathan flicked on the light in the kitchen, setting some brown paper bags on the counter before opening the fridge and beginning to empty the contents from the bags into it.

She watched as his hands took out an array of items from butter to a pack of blueberries to a tiny can of tuna.

He must have felt his eyes on her, because her turned a little, locking eyes with her. Eleven blinked, holding his gaze. And Jonathan smiled.

"Tired?" he all but mouthed. He had barely even whispered it, too afraid of waking up Joyce and Will next to her, even though he was

how far away.

Eleven looked back at the TV for a moment before catching his gaze again, nodding. "Tired," she mouthed back.

Jonathan closed the fridge and cocked his head to the side, gesturing in the direction of the bedrooms. "Bed?"

Eleven stared down the dark hallway, an unsettling feeling in the pit of her stomach. She'd never felt too hot on the idea of wandering around the house at night while everyone else was conked out. She didn't enjoy the creaks and even though this house wasn't the setting of any of her bad memories, the flashbacks were horrible.

She simply shrugged at Jonathan.

He seemed to get it.

Maybe the move was going to get better, El decided. Maybe she'd be able to live with it all.